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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 001758

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR S/CT:JMANN/ACHAMBERS; ALSO PASS SA, SA/INS

NSC FOR E. MILLARD

LONDON FOR POL/RIEDEL

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [KCRM](#) [PINS](#) [CE](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Sri Lanka update

Ref: State 179250

(U) Classified by W. Lewis Amselem, Charge d'Affaires.
Reasons 1.5 (b, d).

11. (C) Per Reftel Action Request, Mission has carefully reviewed the Sri Lanka section of the 2001 Patterns of Global Terrorism Report. Mission provides the following update for Department's review:

-- The Sri Lankan government continues to support the global campaign against terrorism.

-- Domestic situation: For the first time since 1995, the GSL and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) held peace talks, September 16-18. (Note: The LTTE is a FTO-listed organization.) The Norwegian government facilitated the talks, which took place in Thailand. By all accounts, the talks were successful, with both sides agreeing to meet again in coming months, and to form joint bodies to look into humanitarian- and demilitarization-related issues. There was also agreement that Muslim leader Rauf Hakeem would meet with LTTE leader V. Prabhakaran in October. The focus of this meeting would be to decrease LTTE-Muslim tensions, especially in Sri Lanka's ethnically mixed Eastern Province (see more on this situation below). Also of importance was that in a press conference held at the end of the talks the chief LTTE negotiator made remarks that edged away from an outright demand for a separate state for Tamils.

-- The GSL lifted its legal ban on the LTTE on September 4, 2002. The GSL took this step in order to facilitate the peace process, as the LTTE had demanded that the ban be lifted as an explicit condition for the group's entry into peace talks. The GSL's ban had been in place since January 1998. Although symbolic, the lifting of the ban has had little practical effect. An estimated 800 Tamils accused of being terrorist operatives linked with the LTTE remain incarcerated under Sri Lanka's Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) provisions, for example.

-- A ceasefire, which began in December 2001 and was formalized into a "cessation of hostilities" accord in February 2002, remains in effect as of September 2002.

-- A recent statement issued by the Norwegian government-run Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) reports that violations of the February accord by both sides decreased dramatically in recent months. Almost all of the violations were minor, with most of them attributed to the LTTE. The reported violations by the LTTE include instances of forced recruitment for its military (some of it of children), and the widespread extortion of money from Tamils and Muslims. (Note: The LTTE recently released some children who had been forcibly recruited.)

-- There have been no reports of terrorist violence (suicide bombings, etc.) by the LTTE since the ceasefire began in December 2001. The LTTE has not renounced the use of terrorism, however.

-- There have been instances of Muslim-Tamil violence in which people have been killed in past months, including a series of incidents in late June in the Eastern Province. The LTTE has been accused of some degree of involvement in the June incidents, but these reports are not confirmed. The LTTE has also been accused in at least one incident involving the killing of a Tamil said to be an opponent of the group. The LTTE has denied any involvement.

12. (U) Minimize considered.

AMSELEM